

# **US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE – SOUTHWEST REGION**

## **HURRICANE RITA UPDATE AS OF September 26, 2005 – 1730 HOURS MDST**

### **ONGOING ITEMS OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

Until further notice, Central Command briefings at 0845 and the conference calls at 0900 will continue between the Regional Office, the Incident Command Team and those Field Stations that received direct impact from the Hurricane.

Project leaders and supervisors have accounted for all employees. Trinity River, Anahuac, McFaddin and Texas Point Refuges remain closed to the public, as does a law enforcement office in Beaumont.

The Southwest Region's Incident Command Team ICP has been relocated to the Chambers County Commissioner Precinct #4 building in Baytown, TX. Team liaison continues to make contact with state and county officials in affected areas to determine appropriate mission assignments. The team continues its focus on damage assessments and assistance to employees as well as opening up county emergency routes, Refuge facilities and to provide security. Three divisions were on the ground today working at Anahuac, Trinity River and McFadden.

There are 60 personnel assigned to the Team. Numerous Service personnel are providing support from within the region as well as assistance being received from other regions. Additional requests are being made for law enforcement officers to provide protection in Chambers County.

Cooperating and Assisting Agencies: Chambers County Judge, Mid County Commissioner, West County Commissioner, Anahuac Volunteer Fire Department, Cleveland and Conroe Police Departments, Liberty County Sheriff, Jefferson County, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Department of Transportation, Wooden Spoon Café.

So far a shop building at McFaddin sustained damages making it beyond repair, an office at Trinity River and possibly a law enforcement office in Beaumont have sustained roof and water damages. It is too early to provide a complete assessment of damages, but rain, flooding and wind have impacted employees personal or facility residences as well as some facilities themselves. Crews attempting access to Texas Point turned back due to a potential gas line leak.

Employees must make requests for assistance through the Team who will then place the request to the Hurricane Rita Dispatch Desk for coordination. All personnel support, boats, vehicles, equipment and supplies are to be requested and assigned through the system.

A Critical Stress Debriefing unit is being ordered. Employees needing immediate assistance can call a counselor at 1-800-222-0364 24-hours a day.

Major concerns are shortages of fuel and potable water, downed power lines, storm debris, phone outages and highway access.

Weather continues to be extremely hot with heat index reaching up to 115 degrees. Some relief is in sight for later in the week. Latest observations and forecasts have the Trinity River at Liberty cresting at around 26.5 feet tonight (flood stage of 26 feet), then dropping steadily Tuesday. The gauge data for Liberty indicates this will produce significant lowland flooding and water up to one foot deep in some outlying communities. River expected to drop below flood stage again by Tuesday afternoon and below bankfull before Wednesday morning. First gauge downriver from Lake Livingston is flowing at around 25,000 cfs, which is down from 60,000 cfs this morning, and is decreasing rapidly. Lake level is stabilized and release volume has slowed dramatically, if not stopped altogether.

**INFORMATION ACCESS:**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS COUNSELORS CAN BE REACHED 24-HOURS AT:**

**1-800- 222-0364**

**INTERNET:**

Anyone seeking information on Hurricane Rita may do so via these Service links:

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>    <http://www.fws.gov/>

**THE SOUTHWEST REGION'S HURRICANE RITA EMERGENCY INFORMATION DESK:**

Employees can now reach the Southwest Region's Command Center's Hurricane Rita Emergency Information Desk by e-mail or text messaging at: [hurricanerita@fws.gov](mailto:hurricanerita@fws.gov)

**TELEPHONE:**

The Emergency Information Desk is being staffed at the Regional Office through Sunday, September 25 -- hours of operation are from 0600 to 1800 daily. Initially the Desk is serving as a centralized communications base for all affected staff and offices and following landfall serve as a resource Dispatch Center.

**\*HURRICANE RITA EMERGENCY INFORMATION DESK PHONE NUMBER:  
505-248-6508**

Employees may check for pre-recorded information on the hurricane by phoning the Region's 24-Hour Emergency Phone Line at:

**\*24-Hour Employee Emergency Hotline: 505-248-6543**

**NOTE: Any media inquiries will be handled by External Affairs: 505-248-6911**

Daily updates will be completed by COB each day and press releases issued as necessary.

**END OF REPORT**